

***Report of the Workshop III Women and science***  
***by***  
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In recent years the European Commission has increased interests and actions on the valorisation of women competence in Science.

This is because the lack of women in the higher echelons of the university and scientific institutions is common to all European countries and this under-representation of the female gender compromises the achievement of excellence in scientific work, and in European competitiveness, it is a waste of professional resources and a clear violation of the rights of all people to be evaluated according to the work they have carried out and not their gender.

These activities have produced a positive impact on the visibility and awareness of the gender issues in science, at different levels. In fact since late nineties – when this issue was raised by the European Commission – a specific unit was set up with the aim of creating and promoting networks, organizing meetings, supporting researches in order to enhance the role of women in the European research.

The presence of gender differences in every nation, field and institution in scientific research makes coordinated intervention necessary. Only a political solution of the problem can lay the foundations for larger-scale actions.

These actions should take into account the legitimate requests of women for equal opportunities and avoid public funds invested in training women and men for scientific careers being wasted as a result of the exclusion of worthy individuals from career advancement. The achievement of excellence should be based on the evaluation of the quality of the scientific product and the professional skills of individuals, and not of their gender. It seems to be tautology but in the European scenario these criteria are very often unmet.

A lot of work has been realized and the Commission has had an important and effective role in this respect as number resolutions, recommendations and action plans set up in these last years, demonstrate. But a lot of work is still needed. The objectives proposed for next steps forward should go beyond elementary statistics, and mobilize the situation:

- Gender equity in a wider Europe since for former communist's countries it is necessary to have a peculiar approach
- Indicators for monitoring and benchmarking
- Platform for networks that is improving women's participation in networks, training for lobbying

Other international organizations as well are involved in the promotion of Women in Science. One of the network already created is the so called IPAZIA-UNESCO, managed by the UNESCO centre in Turin, that have the aim of carrying out the 7<sup>th</sup> point of art. 90 of the UNESCO Agenda framework of Budapest world conference on science, using: the website [www.womensciencenet.org](http://www.womensciencenet.org) and the international Round Tables. The specific target of the network is to stimulate communication between women scientists concerning basic XXI century scientific issues. At the moment scientists from Europe, Africa, South America and Asia have joined the network.

During the workshop the study Minerva's Daughters has been presented. The research demonstrated the existence of various forms of segregation: the horizontal, in that women are concentrated into specific scientific fields; vertical, the scarce presence of women in the top level positions, and contractual one: men are more likely to work with a long-term contract than women. Although the study describes the situation of women researchers in Italy, it can also serve as a model for other countries to follow. The thread linking all the chapters in "Daughters of Minerva" is the desire to encourage and fuel the debate on women in scientific research and act as a catalyst for change. The status quo is neither efficient nor fair: the old-boys network that goes on in many scientific institutions is an anachronistic system of appraisal and allocation of merit. Apart from being an obstacle to reaching the most brilliant results in science it deprives many women of the advantages of a scientific career which men benefit from. Daughters of Minerva demonstrated that the pointlessness and wastefulness of "waiting for equality", the incorrectness of the idea that women are less productive than men in terms of scientific publications, and the impossibility of a "natural recovery" of the existing imbalances in the gender structure of scientific personnel. But this is not enough to have the situation corrected.

The Slovenian situation of women and science both from quantitative and qualitative point of view has been presented. Data illustrate the evolution of the situation since 1993: among some improvements Slovenia still shows discrimination against women in university and research institutions both public and private. The need of continuous monitoring extended on all sectors of the society has been stressed.

The discussion has been focussed on

- The presence of women in science, giving emphasis to the statistics and indicators that have been used
- The stereotypes on the female patterns of scientific career
- The evaluation of merit, addressing the issues of publication and project leadership and appointments

Statistical data and information on the situation of Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia, and Romania have been presented. In every country difficulties faced by women in the scientific sector emerged, and in some, problems in accessing adequate data has been stressed, and regional specificities has been highlighted.

Therefore, the goals of equal opportunities in science differ from one country to another, depending on the social, economic and cultural context. Thus, in striving for gender equality and equity, different European countries may set different priorities.

Representatives from Serbia and Slovenia have pointed out the importance to have qualitative and quantitative studies in order to increase awareness of the scarce presence of women in science and to analyse the reasons of their under-representation.

In Europe, much progress remains to be done in gender equity in science and women are not yet allowed in the corridors of scientific decision-making. The development of indicators suitable for highlighting gender differences, for measuring equity-sensitivity, and for monitoring changes over time largely depends on the awareness of the value of gender statistics as a tool for policy-makers in the management of science. Women should be regarded as essential agents of change and their valorisation as an issue of great importance for the European competitiveness.

Bulgaria introduced a discussion on the feasibility of common activities to be submitted to the European Commission. The idea of launching a common project following the model of “Minerva’s Daughters” has been approved by all the participants.